

Letter to the Editor

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Letter to the Editor

Letters to the editor that propose criticism of specific articles or book reviews previously appearing in The Annals will be accepted for publication.

—J. G.

Frank J. Rader in his article "Harry Hopkins: The ambitious Crusader" which appeared in the Fall 1977 issue of *The Annals of Iowa*, (Vol. 44, No. 2) has clearly confused the names of two Grinnell College professors in citing their influence on Hopkins' choice of a career in social service. He has written:

As an undergraduate Hopkins came under the influence of the populist democracy-social gospel teachings of Professor Jesse Macy, and the internationalist views of Professor Edward Steiner. (p. 85)

It was Jesse Macy, professor of political science at Grinnell College from 1885 to 1912, who was the internationalist. He was a friend and collaborator of the famous scholar and British ambassador to the United States, James Bryce. Macy first met Bryce in 1887, when the latter was a professor at Oriel College, Oxford. In 1895, when Macy was again in England he was invited by Bryce to collaborate with him on a revision of Bryce's scholarly work, *The American Commonwealth*. Macy did this, although it delayed work on his own *The English Constitution*, which was published the following year. (*Jesse Macy: An Autobiography*, edited by Katharine Macy Noyes, Springfield, Ill. and Baltimore, Maryland, 1933, pp. 104-105.) In later years, when Bryce was British Ambassador to the United States, he visited Macy in Grinnell and stayed in his home.

It was this relationship between Macy and Bryce which Robert E. Sherwood found significant:

It would be difficult to exaggerate the influence of this pioneer teacher upon an alert, receptive young student who had within him the making of an aggressive New Dealer and internationalist . . . the scholarly associations established between Macy and Bryce were transmitted to Harry Hopkins and were of vital importance at the time (1941) when Britain faced death at the time of Hitlerism. (Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*. New York, 1950, p. 18)

Professor Macy, then, was the "internationalist" who influenced Hopkins, and it was Dr. Edward A. Steiner (he was always called "Dr." and not "Professor") who was the great advocate of what was called the "social gospel" in his courses in Applied Christianity at Grinnell College. He came to Grinnell in 1903, continuing to "adorn" the chair of Applied Christianity for thirty-eight years. (John Scholte Nollen, *Grinnell College*. Iowa City, 1953, p. 98.)

Steiner was an international figure in that he was born in Slovakia, then a part of Hungary, and received his education at the universities of Heidelberg, Göttingen and Berlin. As a student he made a pilgrimage to the home of Tolstoy because of his interest in revolutionary literature; he became suspect,

and as a fugitive came to the United States. Just before coming to Grinnell College in 1903, he again visited Tolstoy, gathering material for a biography of the great man.

Again Sherwood finds a connection between Hopkins' student days at Grinnell and his later enterprises:

Hopkins was permanently influenced by what he learned from Steiner on the Christian ethic and the teachings of Tolstoy. He had *War and Peace* in mind when, in July, 1941, he flew over the vast Russian forests on the way to Moscow when it came the turn of the Soviet Union to face death at the hands of Nazi Germany. (Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, p. 18)

Rader further confuses Steiner and Macy in discussing Hopkins' decision to go to New York after his graduation, stating "Upon graduation, Hopkins considered a journalistic career, but Professor Macy dissuaded him by securing a position for his student at a summer camp for a New York City settlement house." (Rader, *The Annals*, p. 86)

Sherwood, on the other hand, gives Steiner full credit for this decision on Hopkins' part, the turning point in his career:

When Hopkins was about to graduate from Grinnell College, he went around to see Dr. Steiner to say good-by. He had not made up his mind as to his future career; . . . Dr. Steiner showed Hopkins a telegram he had received from Christadora (sic) House, a charitable institution on Avenue B in the New York slums. The telegram asked if Steiner could suggest a Grinnell student to act as counselor that summer at the Christadora camp for poor children near Bound Brook, New Jersey, and Steiner asked Hopkins if he might be interested in this temporary job. (Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, p. 21)

But whether Steiner deserves full credit for Hopkins' decision is open to reconsideration, especially in light of a letter in the Grinnell College archives, which was written in 1956 by Professor Louis D. Hartson, who was on the Grinnell College faculty as its first instructor in psychology from 1911 to 1923. (He left Grinnell to join the faculty of Oberlin College.) He was a graduate of Grinnell in the class of 1908, and wrote the letter to Professor Earl D. Strong, a graduate in the class of 1909, who like Hartson had done graduate work and then returned to Grinnell to teach.

The letter (quoted in its entirety below), was evidently occasioned by the obituary which appeared in the *Des Moines Register* following Dr. Steiner's death. Professor Hartson called attention to his letter in the summer of 1977, when he was ill and in a nursing home in Oberlin (he died on Dec. 18, 1977). He may well have been thinking of his own obituary and wanted his connection with Harry Hopkins given notice.

—Margaret Matlack Kiesel
Grinnell

Editor's Note: After Frank Rader's article had been set in type for *The Annals*, a new book on Hopkins was published by G. P. Putnam's Sons: *Harry Hopkins*, by Henry H. Adams. Adams states that Hopkins' life work was shaped in part by three members of the Grinnell faculty. In addition to Professors Macy and Steiner, Adams says that Harvard historian, Albert

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